

**REMARKS**

By this Amendment, Applicants amend claims 2-8, 17, and 21 to cure minor informalities. Claims 1-22 remain pending.

In the Office Action dated August 21, 2003, the Examiner rejected claims 1-22 under 35 U.S.C § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent Application Publication No. US 2003/0050723 A1 (PTO-892, Item A) ("Ozaki"). In addition, the Examiner objected to claims 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 17, 21, and 22 for various informalities. Applicants submit that the rejection and objection should be withdrawn for the reasons discussed below.

**Objection to claims 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 17, 21, and 22**

Applicants request withdrawal of the objection to claims 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 17, and 21, as it is overcome by the amendments herein.

Claim 22 recites, *inter alia*, "establishing the plurality of components to be connected." The Examiner requests (Office Action, page 2) that Applicants "clarify...claim [22] by indicating where or to what the plurality of components is to be connected."

Contrary to the Examiner's position, claim 22 is unambiguous. The recitation objected to by the Examiner refers to a plurality of components that may need interconnecting, which is clear from the current claim language and specification (e.g., page 6, ¶¶ 20, 21). Applicants therefore submit that claim 22 requires no further clarification and request withdrawal of the objection to this claim.

In referring to the specification above, Applicants do not intend to limit the scope of the claims to the exemplary embodiments shown in the drawings and described in the specification. Rather, Applicants expressly affirm their entitlement to have the claims interpreted broadly, to the maximum extent permitted by statute, regulation, and applicable case law.

**Rejection of claims 1-22 under 35 U.S.C § 102(e)**

Applicants submit that *Ozaki* is not a proper prior art reference within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 102(e). Potential references under 35 U.S.C § 102(e) must be “filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent” (See M.P.E.P. § 2136.03). *Ozaki*’s U.S. filing date of July 8, 2002 is subsequent to Applicants’ filing date of December 21, 2001 and therefore subsequent to Applicants’ invention. Thus, *Ozaki* is not a competent prior art reference within the context of 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) and cannot be used to reject Applicants’ claims.

Moreover, Applicants call attention to the following provisions set forth in 706.02(f)(1)(D):

Foreign applications' filing dates that are claimed (via 35 U.S.C. 119(a)-(d), (f), or 365(a)) in applications, which have been published as U.S. or WIPO application publications or patented in the U.S., may not be used as 35 U.S.C. 102(e) dates for prior art purposes. This includes international filing dates claimed as foreign priority dates under 35 U.S.C. 365(a).

*Ozaki*’s foreign priority date of September 7, 2001 cannot be used to antedate Applicant’s filing date and, therefore, cannot be used to qualify *Ozaki* as a 35 U.S.C. 102(e) reference.

Because *Ozaki* is not a competent prior art reference within the context of 35 U.S.C. §102(e), Applicants request withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-22 as being anticipated by *Ozaki* and the timely allowance of these claims. Should the Examiner continue to dispute the patentability of the pending claims, Applicants request a new non-final Office Action setting forth the relevant reasons and evidence.

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**Conclusion:**

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request the reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

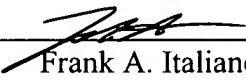
The Office Action contains a number of statements reflecting characterizations of the related art and the claims. Regardless of whether any such statement is identified above, Applicants decline to automatically subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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By:   
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